DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 866 SO 029 986

AUTHOR	Roelofs, Anna; Smaby, Beverly
TITLE	The Meeting at Newtowne: A Play Set in 17th Century New England.
INSTITUTION	Primary Source, Cambridge, MA.
PUB DATE	1992-00-00
NOTE	62p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Primary Source, P.O. Box 381711, Cambridge, MA, 02238 ($15.00).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Citizenship Education; Class Activities; *Colonial History (United States); *Community Involvement; Drama; Elementary Secondary Education; *Government Role; Local Government; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS	Daily Activities; Drama in Education; Historical Background; *New England; Regional History; Seventeenth Century; Town Meetings; *Village Life

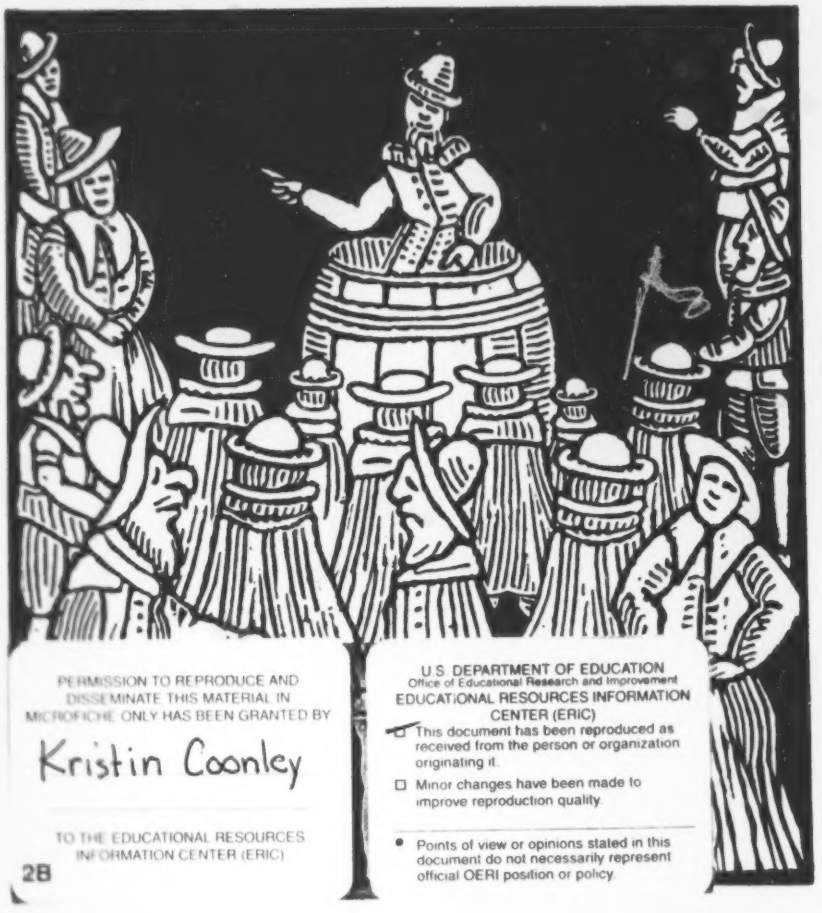
ABSTRACT

This play, intended for use in classrooms (grades 3-12), introduces ideas about village life in New England during the 17th century. The play helps students learn about values, customs, language, and problems of settlers in colonial New England. The setting of the play is Newtowne, (now known as Cambridge) Massachusetts in 1635. The play's theme is governance. Community scenes are set before and after town meetings. Material in the play is drawn from the Massachusetts town records of Cambridge and Dedham as well as from other historical sources. A preface discusses writing and using the play. Teaching notes, study questions, a glossary, a 10-item teacher bibliography, and a 25-item student bibliography are included. ((BT))

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 430 866

The Meeting at Newtowne



PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kristin Coonley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

A Play Set in 17th Century New England

Anna Roelofs & Beverly Smaby

SO 029 986

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Meeting at Newtowne

A Play Set in 17th Century New England

_____ by _____

Anna Roelofs & Beverly Smaby

Copyright 1992
Primary Source

All rights reserved. Permission is granted for reproduction of the play for use in a single classroom. Reproduction of all other material requires written permission from the publisher.

Table of Contents

I. Preface iii

II. The Play

Scene 1. *A Gathering of Friends* 1

Scene 2. *Convening the Meeting and Granting of Land* 4

Scene 3. *Consider the Schoolmaster* 7

Scene 4. *Hogs, Rings, and Fences* 10

Scene 5. *Of Cows and Cattle* 12

Scene 6. *The Woodreeve's Report* 15

Scene 7. *Stealing Canoes and Listening to Strangers* 18

Scene 8. *Elections* 20

Scene 9. *A Second Gathering of Friends* 23

III. Appendices

Historical Notes 27

Study Questions 33

Glossary of Words and Phrases 37

Additional Town Meeting Issues 43

Map of Newtowne 45

Bibliographies for Teachers and Students 46

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Judith Contrucci for her ideas as a dramatist and educator, to Eric Carlson for his enthusiasm and his questions, and to Robert St. George, whose comments both encouraged us and suggested further research.

Thanks also to Carolina Mancuso for her skill and patience setting the text and to Richard Roelofs for assistance with the glossary and for seeing the project through the printer.

The text of *The Meeting at Newtowne* was set on a Macintosh Word Processor and camera-ready pages prepared on a laser printer. The typeface is Bookman. The book was printed at Downeast Graphics and Printing in Ellsworth, Maine using the offset process. All interior pages are printed on recycled paper.

Cover illustration and section title decorations are adapted from an English woodcut (1641), courtesy Radio Times Hulton Picture Library and The Bettman Archive.

The map on p. 45 is adapted from one prepared in 1934 showing Cambridge, Massachusetts as it was in 1638, courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

Preface

The Beginning

Some years ago, a sixteen year old neighbor said to me, "I loved history this year; I had a teacher who let me learn instead of teaching me." I understood this; it fit right in with my view of teaching, but I didn't realize until later that my own school experience had been much like hers. In my student days, I loved history only one year, the year I was allowed to research and produce plays. Much later, as head teacher of a small private school in Utica New York, I returned to this early love. With assistance from teachers and parents, our students built an Iroquois-style longhouse on the playground, and classroom environments simulating first an early settler family kitchen and later a traveler's inn on the Erie Canal. They produced Japanese folk plays and European mystery plays, and learned about medieval geography, travel, markets, dress and social roles by planning and participating in an all-day Fair in the style of 13th century Troyes. When this effort was recognized by the award of a curriculum development grant from NEH, I began to research and write in earnest. I was "hooked" on history.

After relocating to the Boston area I began reading everything I could find on the American Revolutionary period. I helped write some educational materials for the Paul Revere House, and served briefly as one of the interpreters or guides at that historic site. The house itself, built in 1676, was a strong reminder that American history goes far back beyond the Revolution. When I was offered an opportunity to work on another NEH grant, this time on the history of Cambridge, I became increasingly interested in the earliest colonies in New England. The more I read, the more I was intrigued by the differences as well as the continuity between those 17th century communities and our own. I felt that much solid historical information might be made accessible and interesting to students by dramatizing some of the issues that the early town meetings considered. Through my work at the King Open Program in Cambridge I met one of the parents, Beverly Smaby, who has a PhD in history and whose skills and interests complemented mine. We agreed on the scope of the project and divided the tasks.

Writing the Play

Because we wanted to begin with information from primary sources, we looked first at the oldest records kept by the towns of Dedham and Cambridge (at that time called Newtowne) in Massachusetts. We found that when the townsmen met they dealt with very concrete practical matters, such as rules for the use and maintenance of common resources, methods of raising revenue for common purposes, the settlement of small claims and disputes, and the appointment of suitable persons for special responsibilities. We also looked at old maps of Cambridge. Some of these maps showed the names of householders, and we were initially puzzled to find that a very large number of houses had changed hands over the space of just a few years. Was there some sort of real estate boom here in the 1630's? Further research revealed that around this time, the Rev. Thomas Hooker and many of his congregation left Newtowne and relocated in Connecticut, selling their homes to the Rev. Thomas Shepard, and his congregation, who were newly arrived from England. Clearly this out-migration was a major event in the life of the community, but we found no mention of it in the town meeting records. From other sources we learned that permission for the move had to be obtained from the governing council of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, called the General Court, to which all towns sent representatives. In solving our puzzle about the maps, we had also learned that although the men of Newtowne largely governed themselves, some very important policy decisions affecting them were made elsewhere.

Seventeenth century town records aren't easy reading, especially on first encounter. I found that I could usually avoid getting stumped by the often unfamiliar spelling if I read straight through a section, getting a rough sense of the whole and then trying to figure out the remaining obscure words from the context. Often it was necessary to consult dictionaries and other reference materials in order to expand my understanding of the text. I also asked questions and got useful answers from my co-author and from other historians, as well as from librarians and curators. Before starting to write I immersed myself for a while in reading the King James Bible (1611) and some of the plays of William Shakespeare (d. 1616), so that when I came to compose dialogue I had some feel for the rhythm and cadence as well as the specific words and phrases our characters might have used.

Since the town records reflect only decisions made, with no transcript of the discussion, we needed a great deal of additional information and so research continued thoughout the writing of the play. For example, when I worked on Scene IV we knew how much the men of Newtowne had agreed to pay their schoolmaster, and how they proposed to fund his salary, but we didn't know what alternatives might have been considered. We also didn't know which children would have received formal instruction, or what the schoolmaster was expected to teach. The letters and journals of Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop provided some of the information needed to write that scene. Other questions could not be answered so directly. In writing the two scenes that attempt to capture the experience and outlook of the women of Newtowne I had to rely on a variety of sources giving general information about the lives of women in the 17th century. Using these sources, I constructed the three distinct personalities whose conversations help to frame the play.

Using the Play

The Meeting at Newtowne is a resource for learning more than a theater piece. It's not necessary (or possible) to get through the play in a single class period, and it's important to allow time for reflection and discussion after each scene.

I have used this play for several years in classes from 3rd through 8th grade. I have offered one or more scenes as a solo reading, as a group reading (using all adults, or combining adults and students), as a simulation involving the whole class, and as an informal production piece performed by older students for younger ones.

The play has few roles for women, and even these women have no part in the decisions made in town meeting. All the characters depicted are whites of English origin. Casting the play therefore raises issues of gender and race. I made an early decision to assign parts without regard to race or ethnicity. I have cast according to gender, however, and for many of the young women students this has been a difficult and emotional issue. Nevertheless, I would recommend this practice because I believe that it is instructive for young women (and young men as well) to understand how much the choices for women have expanded over the past 350 years. In this and many other ways, introducing today's students to an earlier era can be like introducing them to another culture, and their sense of

dislocation, dissonance and even dismay can present a valuable opportunity for teaching and learning about social change.

You Can Do It Too

The approach we model here can be used to bring to life times and places far removed from colonial New England. Every city and town has some interesting history, and often there are records available in libraries, court houses, and historical societies. In some areas it may be necessary to turn to oral history as a source of information. Creative use of these local resources can enrich the study of American and even of World history. Some questions to consider are: Why was our town located where it is, and how did people and supplies get there? Are there early maps to study and to copy? If the early records are in another language (perhaps Spanish, French, Swedish or German) what can that tell us about the history of our town? How did our town handle the influx of newcomers in certain time periods? Who were these newcomers and how did they fare? Have any substantial groups of people moved away from our town in a relatively short period of time? Who were these people, and why did they leave? What did our town do about wars and civil conflicts, about slavery, about suffrage, about prohibition? What happened during the Depression in our town? When and how were public schools set up? How did earlier inhabitants of our town deal with such problems as the care and control of animals, the use and ownership of land, the maintenance of public order, and the relations between individuals and groups that did not share the same political or religious beliefs?

I hope you will enjoy using *The Meeting at Newtowne* in your classroom, and that you and your students will get "hooked" on doing original research in your own backyards.

Anna Roelofs
Cambridge, Massachusetts
1992

The Meeting at Newtowne

The Play

The Meeting at Newtowne

Scene I: *A Gathering of Friends*

Characters:
Mercy Carter, *wife of Samuel Carter, shoemaker*
Elizabeth Sackett, *wife of Symon Sackett, sea captain*
Sarah Woolcott, *widow of George Woolcott, linen weaver*
Bellman, *the town crier*

Scene:
A street in old Cambridge, then called Newtowne. Mercy Carter and Elizabeth Sackett stand talking. It is mid-March, 1635. The day is sunny but there is a chill in the air and the women are wrapped in their cloaks. Sarah Woolcott approaches, walking slowly.

Elizabeth Sackett: Goody Woolcott, it is good to see thee out today. This winter, I know, has been a bale for thee.

Sarah Woolcott: *(Sadly.)* Aye, friend, I will tell thee my heart. This winter did seem the longest of my life. Thee knows my Hanna was stricken with the Pocks. Her children are all small and lively and the care of them did make me weary. No sooner had Hanna recovered than Mr. Woolcott was taken with the same cause. I prayed constantly, but the Lord willed that my husband should be brought home and thee know, he did die in January.

Mercy Carter: *(Earnestly.)* I do think thee is a worthy matron and very courageous. Hanna spake often about thee this winter, thy hard work and thy sorrow. I would wish to have thy patience. I have only one child to care for but I did often stir up and down with such a restless spirit. Mr. Carter said I should help him more with the shoemaking as the long winter made for a brisk business. I tried but I found the job too tedious. Besides, he has an apprentice.

Elizabeth Sackett: We all had our troubles this winter. Mr. Sackett set sail again for England. I thought he would make no great stay but, alas, he was gone long and I missed him sorely.

I was left in charge of the servants who gave me no end of trouble. Whenever I would rebuke any one of them, they all did their work so ill-favoredly that I grew weary. One in particular is sossy. "Why," saith I, "does thee not have all the linens washed before the Bellman goes about?" "Fie," saith she, "anyone can see there are too many!"

Sarah Woolcott: Thee cannot ask for more wit and care from her if she was not well govern'd at home. Since Mr. Woolcott died, Luke Perkins, our apprentice, has not worked well. I think he misses his master. He is provided with all that is required and befitting to an apprentice, his food and clothing, even lessons to read and write. I see to his instruction every day. But he weeps and does not learn well.

Mercy Carter: How does thee manage, Goody Woolcott? Does thee keep the record books too, now that thy husband is died?

Sarah Woolcott: I do, and grateful I am that my father taught me to read and write. Our business was brisk this winter. It seems that everyone needed cloth for scarves and hoods. Before he fell ill, Mr. Woolcott wanted to hire a weaver from Boston. At the town meeting today the matter will be taken for serious consideration, since this Stranger is not from Newtowne. Mr. Woolcott was to speak. *(She sighs.)* I would speak in his stead, but of course I cannot.

Elizabeth Sackett: Thee has thy sons to speak for thee, good churchmen they. I do but ask thee this, who speaks for me? Though we have much property, Mr. Sackett doth not own the covenant and cannot vote in meeting. His ship be come in soon with cattle for the town, but he may not decide their keep.

Mercy Carter: Thee does put me in remembrance that when I was young, I often asked my mother, "Who speaks for me?" She said, "Thy father now, and when thee will be married thy husband shall." So now I must go and mind the shop. Mr. Carter will be loathe to forfeit the 12 pence to the town if he should be late to the meeting house. *(With mock forbearance.)* Aye, it is true that a man may work from sun to sun but a woman's work is never done. *(She exits.)*

Sarah Woolcott: *(Laughing.)* And I am chilled! This March breeze is more a gale. Farewell, Goody Sackett. The Bellman

comes to cry the meeting. I must learn the mind of the town, whether the new weaver will be given land or no.

Bellman enters and walks across the stage.

Bellman: *(Chanting.)* "Ten o'clock, town meeting today.
All will be on time, I pray."

Sarah follows the Bellman off stage.

Elizabeth Sackett: *(Calling.)* Farewell, my dear friend. Come to visit me soon. I will make thee a poset drink and we shall welcome in the spring!

Scene II:
Convening the Meeting & Granting of Land

Characters:
Symon Bradstreet, *Selectman chairing the meeting*
William Spencer, *Clerk of the meeting*
Daniel Patrike, *Selectman*
Francis Austen
William Goodwine | *Townsmen*
Peter Woolcott
Other townsmen and women

Scene:
People are gathered in the meeting house wearing cloaks or coats. The weather is chilly. They stand in small groups talking. Mr. Bradstreet and Mr. Spencer are seated in front of the room talking to each other.

Symon Bradstreet stands and looks out at the people.

Symon Bradstreet: *(Loudly.)* Let us now meet. *(He waits until the room is quiet, then speaks with good humor.)* I see that each of you has heeded the Bellman and your own conscience and are on time. I call to mind that seats shall be taken as before, with respect to age, estate, and service to our community.

People move to take seats; as in church services, women sit separately from men.

We ask that peace be the fruit of our companionship as we meet to further arrange the practical affairs of our community. I ask you to use care and diligence and forbearance as we submit our differences for discussion so that mutually acceptable agreements can be reached. We need to pledge again our obedience to the general consent. Let us begin.

William Spencer: Francis Austen has come in his own cause.

Symon Bradstreet: Let him speak.

Francis Austen: I beg leave to explain why I have come. The land given me across the marsh from Windmill Hill is wet all the year. I can neither build a tool house upon it nor grow any crops.

William Spencer: Yea, my land is near to there and I know that this is so.

Other townsmen nod and speak in agreement to each other.

Daniel Patrike: *(Thoughtfully.)* I think we should rectify this by granting Goodman Austen new land in Westend field, equal in acres to the land he now has.

Symon Bradstreet: Is this agreeable to all?

Ayes and nods in agreement.

(To Austen.) God and this town do grant you new land in Westend field.

Austen nods courteously and resumes his seat.

William Spencer: Others asked at our last meeting for land to farm.

Symon Bradstreet: The Selectmen met since about these various requests. Would Goodman Patrike give a fair account of the considerations?

Daniel Patrike: *(Reading.)* Upon repair of the common pales about Westend field, Daniell Dennison be given five acres, Samuel Carter be given four acres, Sister Chester, four acres and William Andrews, seven acres for his growing family.

William Goodwine: Sister Chester is now a widow. What does she need of four acres? Granting land to sit idle may do damage to the town. *(There are whispers among the women.)*

Daniel Patrike: Several of the Selectmen spoke agreement to you but they were cried down. Sister Chester has strong and hard-working sons, eager to become worthy members of this community. We have decided to recommend that this land be divided as I have said.

Symon Bradstreet: Is this agreed then?

Ayes and nods from everyone.

(To the clerk.) You may record this. *(To the meeting.)* I call to your remembrance that Goodman Woolcott did ask land for Josea Starr, a Stranger, to live in Newtowne and work in the weave shop. Now that Goodman Woolcott is died, how is this to be resolved? This Josea Starr is a weaver newly come from England and is living in Boston. Widow Woolcott without her husband hath full charge of the shop. It is a burden to her, and the apprentice is in need of a wise master. Who speaks for Josea Starr?

Peter Woolcott: I speak for Josea Starr and for the granting of land to him. The weave business grows, and since I am now a journeyman cooper, I have no time to help in my father's shop. My brother, Tymothy, is young and is determined to go to sea. Our mother cannot train the apprentice to weave and she hath many other tasks.

Daniel Patrike: God seldom sendeth a grievance without a remedy. We did inquire of Goodman Starr his intentions. He hath no tie to duties in England and he hath removed to this land to raise his fortunes. He seems an honest man and hath transgressed no laws that we know. His skill at weaving is well known. The town hath need of him and we have determined that he should be granted land.

Symon Bradstreet: Do all agree?

Ayes and all around.

It shall be so. *(To Mr. Spencer.)* You may record this.

Scene III: *Consider the Schoolmaster*

Characters:
Symon Bradstreet, *Selectman chairing the meeting*
William Spencer, *Clerk*
John Clarke
Ralph Hudson | *Townsmen*
William Andrews
Thomas Hooker, *Minister and Townsman*
Other townsmen and women as before

Scene:
The meeting house. The town meeting is in session.

Symon Bradstreet: Now there is a matter of payment to our schoolmaster John Ringe. How much shall he be paid and how shall we raise this sum?

John Clarke: May I speak?

Symon Bradstreet: I give you leave, Mr. Clarke.

John Clarke: I think it will be difficult to raise more than 15 pounds a year; and Mr. Ringe is hired for seven years. That means raising a sum of 105 pounds, a princely sum for a schoolmaster.

Ralph Hudson raises his hand to speak.

Symon Bradstreet: Mr. Hudson.

Ralph Hudson: I call to remembrance that last year the town of Boston agreed to pay their schoolmaster 20 pounds a year. After all, can we do less than Boston?

Thomas Hooker: I do agree to that. The people of Newtowne greatly favor learning.

William Andrews: And I see a marvelous providence of God in bringing Mr. Ringe to us. He is a scholar and a man of God. He is known to use the rod of correction, which must sometimes be employed for the children's good.

Symon Bradstreet: Is it agreed then that Mr. Ringe will receive 20 pounds a year for seven years? *(Ayes all around.)* And to raise this money?

Ralph Hudson: I propose that all families with boys and young men between the ages of four and fourteen pay eight shillings a year for each student.

John Clarke: Is that to be paid in one sum?

Ralph Hudson: *(Thoughtfully.)* No, it could be paid in two parts.

Thomas Hooker: Mr. Hudson, I am of a different mind about that. I think the aforesaid sum should be raised by the usual manner of rating upon estates, where each family is charged according to the value of their property. We should consider the value of broken and unbroken land, the worth of houses, and the valuation of animals. Surely steers, oxen and horses are worth more than sheep and swine.

Ralph Hudson: *(Objecting.)* Hear now, I am of a different mind. Not all may want to pay such fees for the schooling of another's son. A man might take a boy to raise in his home, but his father should pay for his lessons.

John Clarke: Some families with many sons may pay eight shillings each only with great hardship.

William Andrews: We have spoken diverse things but we do agree that hiring the schoolmaster benefits the town. We desire that our sons should become honorable members of this Commonwealth and their studies are important. I propose that we decide, as Goodman Hudson suggests, to raise the sum among those families with sons in the school. But one thing more. If 20 pounds is not raised by this time next year, the matter shall come again before this meeting that the town may raise the remaining amount among us all.

Symon Bradstreet: Is this then agreed? *(Ayes all around.)* And we shall instruct Mr. Ringe to equally teach such as come under his care no matter whether their parents be rich or poor. May this body now speak of what subjects Mr. Ringe shall teach?

Thomas Hooker: I believe that he should teach the children with us to write, to cipher and to read the English tongue.

John Clarke: They must also acquire a knowledge of our laws, and perhaps learn Latin and Greek.

William Andrews: Aye, and most important, our sons should know the principles of the Christian religion.

Symon Bradstreet: Are we in agreement then that if these things are taught and if, in addition, the students learn good manners and dutiful behavior towards all, especially their superiors, we shall be well satisfied? *(Ayes all around.)* And shall we agree to hear from Mr. Ringe in six months' time about his progress and his needs? *(Ayes all around.)* Mr. Spencer, will you read the minute?

William Spencer: The inhabitants of Newtowne, in consideration of the great necessity to provide for the education of our youth, do with unanimous consent declare their willingness to promote and guide that work, and further, do consent to raise the sum of 20 pounds per year toward the maintenance of our schoolmaster, Mr. John Ringe.

Scene IV: *Hogs, Rings, and Fences*

Characters:
Symon Bradstreet, *Selectman chairing the meeting*
William Patten | *Townsmen*
Richard Rice |
Other townspeople as before

Scene:
The meeting house. The town meeting continues.

William Patten: I have a complaint concerning Goodman Rice his large sow. Thrice last year during the growing season she forced her way into my kitchen garden and caused a great scathe. I have dealt with Goodman Rice many times and still he refuses to pay me for the damage.

Richard Rice: I have not paid because Goodman Patten's troubles are his own blame, not mine. My sow wore a proper ring all the last season, but Goodman Patten did not maintain his fence. It has a gap large enough easily to give entrance to a hog with a ring.

William Patten: But if you had kept your hogs yoked last season, or with the other hogs on the island, then your sow could not have gotten into my ground, for the gap in my fence is not that large.

Richard Rice: That may be the truth, but there is no law that requires yokes. I do not wish to yoke my hogs for I fear they will get caught between the pales of a fence and die of strangulation. The fee for the swineherd I cannot pay.

William Patten: And I, for my part, fear that I and Goody Patten will die of starvation if your sow continues on the loose, for she has marked my garden as her own feeding lot.

An argument begins with some townsmen taking the side of William Patten and others, the side of Richard Rice. The women whisper among themselves and watch the men.

Symon Bradstreet: *(Pounding his gavel to end the commotion.)* Gentlemen, you act the part of hogs yourselves. I order you to stand still and mind the manners your parents should have taught you. Goodman Patten, can you describe the damage that was done?

William Patten: Indeed yes! The first time, Goodman Rice his sow ate all my young celery plants. The second time, she ate nothing before I caught her, but she trampled my tansy bed underfoot. The third time, she ate half my onions and most of my salad greens. She also made a wider gap in my fence each time she came in.

Symon Bradstreet: Very well. Selectman Wetherall will please look into the matter and place a value on the scathes. He shall determine who carries the greater blame, the owner of the sow or the owner of the fence, and he shall settle the cost of the damage on the man judged most at fault.

William Patten: Mr. Bradstreet, I am not the only man plagued by the scathes of swine. Can there be no greater protection than a good fence?

Symon Bradstreet: When the Selectmen next meet we shall consider whether to require yokes during the growing season unless the hogs are kept on the island. In the meantime, you must agree to follow whatever decision Selectman Wetherall shall reach about your case.

William Patten: I do agree. I hope the matter may be settled soon.

Scene V: *Of Cows and Cattle*

Characters:
Symon Bradstreet, *Selectman chairing the meeting*
William Spencer, *Clerk*
Richard Rice
Nathan Aldus | *Townsmen*
Thomas Judd
William Patten
Other townspeople as before

Scene:
The meeting house. The town meeting continues.

Symon Bradstreet: Now that we have put to rest the matter between Goodman Rice and Goodman Patten we need to speak with them again on behalf of the whole town. I call to your remembrance that it hath been almost a year since we expected the cows and cattle from England. Now they are at hand. Captain Sackett's ship is in the harbor. Other ships may not be far behind. Let us hear what Goodman Rice agreed to do.

The women whisper expectantly; they have not had dairy products for a long time.

Richard Rice: *(Thinking.)* I do recall that I agreed to keep 100 cows for the space of three months and that I am to have ten pounds paid to me within ten days after the ships be come in.

Nathan Aldus: Also, you are to have two men help you keep them the first 14 days and one man the next seven days. I would like to be that man. I will gladly keep the cows two Sabbath days.

Richard Rice: Your help and another's will indeed be needed at first. The animals have been at sea and will be restless and unfamiliar. We will need to fetch the cows from town common every morning half an hour after the sun is up and return with them for milking half an hour before the sun goeth down.

I recall I did agree to pay three pence a cow for every night I leave any out.

Thomas Judd: We asked also that you keep no cows for any man except you have leave from the townsmen. Not everyone has paid the required fee. You must pay a fine of five shillings a cow for any you should so keep. You do have liberty, though, to keep your own heifer without pay.

Symon Bradstreet: *(Confers with William Spencer.)* Between us all, we have remembered what was said without the need of reading. The ships will be asking leave to unload soon. Goodman Rice, are these things still agreeable to you?

Richard Rice: They are.

Symon Bradstreet: And what of you, Goodman Patten? Do you still agree to keep the dry cattle across the river?

William Patten: Would Mr. Spencer read from the record so that I can recall all that was decided?

William Spencer: March last. Agreed with William Patten to keep 100 dry cattle on the other side of the river for the space of seven months, to begin when the town shall appoint him. He shall have 20 pounds, the one half paid him in money when he hath kept half his time and the other half in corn when he hath done. And he is to have a man to help him the first 14 days, he paying him for one week, the town for the other. Also, he is to lodge across the river except once a week, and to have a man to keep the cattle every other sabbath day. He shall pay 10 shillings a beast for every beast he shall lose.

Thomas Judd: Like Goodman Rice, Goodman Patten should keep no cattle for men who have not paid. He must pay 5 shillings a head for any he shall so keep.

William Patten: *(Nodding.)* Yea, I do agree to all of that, provided the selectmen settle the question of yoking the hogs. I cannot stay across the river and leave Goody Patten to tend our kitchen garden if she is threatened daily by swine in her celery.

Symon Bradstreet: *(Somewhat impatiently.)* Yes, yes, very well. It is ordered then that Richard Rice shall begin to keep the cows the 11th of April. It is also ordered that William Patten shall begin to keep the dry cattle the 14th of April. After the space of three months we will choose again a keeper for the cows, this one to serve until the end of the growing season be at hand. *(To the clerk.)* Thus the record shall stand.

Scene VI:
The Woodreeve's Report

Characters:
Symon Bradstreet, *Selectman chairing the meeting*
Anthony Fisher, *Townsman serving as Woodreeve*
William Spencer, *Clerk*
Samuel Carter
Nathan Aldus
John Greene
Adam Wetherby | *Townsmen*
William Bailey
Samuel Haddon
Stephen Poast
Other townspeople as before

Scene:
The Meeting House. The town meeting continues.

Symon Bradstreet: Can the Woodreeve give his report?

Anthony Fisher: Yes, Mr. Bradstreet. When I viewed ladders two days ago, I found that two were lacking. Goodman Carter's reached only to his eaves, being 20 feet from the top of his chimney.

Samuel Carter: Excuse me, Mr. Fisher, but I beg leave to explain. The reason for ladders is to reach the chimney in case of fire. If a man climbs to the top of my ladder, he reaches my roof, and from there he can reach the chimney.

Anthony Fisher: It is too dangerous to climb on the roof as the thatch is usually slippery. Besides, the town has set the rule that every man's ladder must reach his chimney. You must follow the rule.

Symon Bradstreet: Who hath the second ladder which was lacking?

Anthony Fisher: Goodman Aldus hath a ladder which is too weak to hold a man's weight.

Nathan Aldus: I know my ladder is weak, but I am poor. I cannot buy wood for a new one. *(He brightens.)* Perhaps after I become a cowherd I can pay.

Anthony Fisher: That is no excuse. You know that everyone is at liberty to cut trees from the common land in order to make ladders.

Nathan Aldus: *(Sheepishly.)* Oh yes. Indeed. Must I pay a fine?

Symon Bradstreet: Not if you make your ladders right within two weeks' time. But if, at the next viewing, your ladders still be lacking, you shall pay to the town a fine of five shillings.

John Greene: If you are finished with the subject of ladders, I would speak to the cutting of firewood.

Anthony Fisher: Do you wish to report a breach of the firewood regulations?

John Greene: Yes, I do. One month ago, I saw Ethan Browne cut wood from the common land, and the next day I saw him leave town with his wagon full of cut wood and come back with it empty. I suspect him of selling it for profit.

Anthony Fisher: That is indeed a serious charge. Any person who can bear witness to this must bring to me the fact.

Adam Wetherby: And I was detained two months ago on my way to Watertown by reason of a tree which someone had felled across the highway. I had to shovel considerable snow over it before I could pass and I was delayed two hours.

William Bailey: It was I did that. I was cutting wood late in the evening and my last tree fell across the highway. It was too dark to continue and I left it for the next day, but my wife took sick in the night and I couldn't return until afternoon.

Anthony Fisher: I am sorry that your wife was poorly but you need to take care that no trees hinder the highway in the first instance. I recall to you the order agreed to one year ago: "If

any man be found to sell wood from the common land at a profit to himself, or to hinder any highway by felling a tree across it, or to cut good lumber trees for firewood, he shall pay a penalty of two shillings, six pence, to be paid half to the informer, the other half to the town."

Symon Bradstreet: You must pay your penalty to the town, Goodman Bailey, but since you informed on yourself, you may keep the informer's half. Mr. Fisher, can you also speak to the mending of fences?

Anthony Fisher: Yes, since it is near the time for the start of the planting of crops in the great fields, the townsmen should set about repairing their assigned portions of the common fences around the fields. I will view the fences of the common fields betwixt the twentieth and the twenty-sixth of this month. Any man whose assigned portion be found insufficient shall pay to the town the sum of five shillings.

Samuel Haddon: Last year I was blamed for bad repairs, but I swear it was not my work. It was Stephen Poast's. My section was the next one north from his.

Stephen Poast: I deny it. I am experienced in carpentry, and my work was not neglectful.

Anthony Fisher: This year, for the more orderly finding of the men whose work is insufficient, the Selectmen have directed that an order be read and posted at a public place. Mr. Spencer, will you read the order?

William Spencer: "It is ordered that everyone who hath any part in the common pales shall set up a stake at the beginning of their pales with their mark upon it, and whosoever paling is judged insufficient by those which are appointed to view the same, the owners are, after notice given, to send within one hour after to mend the same and not to cease until it be finished, upon the forfeiture of a rod to anyone that shall mend it for them."

Symon Bradstreet: Let the order be posted and attended to.

Scene VII:
Stealing Canoes & Listening to Strangers

Characters:
Symon Bradstreet, *Selectman chairing the meeting*
John Bridge
Thomas Judd | *Townsmen*
William Patten
Richard Beats, *a Stranger*
Other townspeople as before

Scene:
The Meeting House. The town meeting continues.

Symon Bradstreet: Before we proceed to the elections, does any man have another thing to report to the town?

John Bridge: Yes sir, I do.

Richard Beats: I do also.

Symon Bradstreet: Mr. Bridge, being a member of this body, may speak first.

John Bridge: A week ago I had need of my canoe to cross the Fresh Pond, but when I came to the place I keep it, it was nowhere to be seen, to my great inconvenience. Goodman Clarke said he saw Robert Day take it away for his own use an hour earlier.

Thomas Judd: I, too, was vexed last month to find my canoe missing. I cannot but think the town should set a fine to prevent the taking of another man's canoe.

John Bridge: Amen to that. If Robert Day had but asked, I would have given him leave and arranged a convenient day, but as I did not know, I wasted above an hour to my great damage that day. I would like to have something for my time.

Symon Bradstreet: Very well. When the new Selectmen next meet, they shall weigh this matter and set a suitable fine to be paid to the owners of canoes as are taken without leave. And now, Mr. Beats, what do you ask?

Richard Beats: I have a request to make to the town. Though I am a Stranger, I beg leave to keep my hog among others on the island.

Symon Bradstreet: Can you not confine him to your own ground or keep him yoked?

Richard Beats: No sir, I cannot. My ground is small and I need it for my kitchen garden. And my hog's yoke made a great sore around his neck and he cannot wear it now. I fear he will cause great damage to the common field nearby.

William Patten: Mr. Bradstreet, I think it wise if Strangers may keep their hogs with ours so that they are watched and kept away from the planting fields. We have had enough report today of the trouble hogs can cause.

Symon Bradstreet: Perhaps we can allow it if they pay a fee as for cows and cattle. We shall ask the selectmen to settle this matter. You may make agreement with them, Goodman Beats.

Richard Beats: Thank you, Mr. Bradstreet. *(He leaves the meeting.)*

Men and women talk among themselves. Some stand; others walk around. These early meeting rooms were small; there was little room to stretch one's legs.

Scene VIII: *Elections*

Characters:
Symon Bradstreet, *Selectman chairing the meeting.*
William Spencer, *Clerk*
Mathew Allen, *Treasurer*
John Olmstead, *Constable*
Timothy Stanly | *Townsmen*
Symon Willard |
Other townspeople as before

Scene:
The Meeting House. The town meeting continues.

Symon Bradstreet: Let us proceed speedily to the choosing of our Selectmen for the year coming. Will Mr. Spencer read the names of candidates agreed to by the nominating committee?

William Spencer: The nominating committee spoke at length and proposes the following men to lead the affairs of our town for the time to come: Mr. Symon Bradstreet, Mr. William Wetherall, Mr. Roger Harlackenden, Mr. John Haynes, Mr Peter Buckley, and Mr. Thomas Shepherd, recently come from England.

Symon Bradstreet: You have heard the names; let us move now to the election.

Timothy Stanly: Pray sir, can townsmen suggest any others to be considered?

Symon Bradstreet: Which men do you wish to add?

Timothy Stanly: This man only: Symon Willard.

Symon Bradstreet: *(To the clerk.)* What do you say, Mr. Spencer? Shall this man be included?

William Spencer: I do not think it wise. He is from a good and pious family, it is true, but being only 20 years old he lacks the weight of age or means.

Symon Bradstreet: Do any others bear witness in this cause? *(No one speaks.)* Very well. I trust that Goodman Stanly is satisfied. I would now proceed to the election. Instead of hands or papers, we shall use Indian corn and beans; the corn to show yea for election, the beans for nay.

Townsmen come to the front of the meeting house, pick up a few beans and corn and drop their choice into a basket. Mr. Spencer then counts the totals. There is quiet talking in the meeting house.

William Spencer: More corn than beans are here; these men are elected.

Symon Bradstreet: Now we must consider the other offices. Since we have had much business to attend to and the day grows late, will the men who presently hold these offices each agree to serve until new men be chosen?

Mathew Allen: Mr. Bradstreet, I wish to step down from the office of Treasurer. My eyes are getting old and do not serve me as they once did.

Symon Bradstreet: *(Thoughtfully.)* Very well. Can you suggest another to take your place?

Mathew Allen: I would suggest John Ringe. He hath the clear head of a schoolmaster, and he ciphers well. He expressed himself willing to be treasurer.

Symon Bradstreet: Are there any others who wish not to serve another year in their elected offices?

John Olmstead: Mr. Bradstreet, as the town grows larger, my duties as Constable take many hours, and I have little time to give to my grist mill. I desire to be relieved of public office for the next year, but I have spoken to no man about taking the office in my stead.

Symon Bradstreet: Perhaps the young man passed over for Selectman would be willing. How is it with you, Mr. Willard? Will you serve as Constable?

Symon Willard: Yes, I am willing.

Symon Bradstreet: Very well. *(To the meeting.)* If it be your will that the Woodreeve and the Surveyor of our highways continue to serve in their offices and that Mr. Ringe be our Treasurer and Mr. Willard our Constable, show your vote with corn. To drop a bean is nay.

The voting is repeated; Spencer again counts the votes from the basket.

William Spencer: We are together in our judgement. These men are chosen.

Symon Bradstreet: Our elections are finished. Let Mr. Spencer post the names of the men who will take care of our town's affairs during the next year. The Selectmen will meet in two weeks' time. If any have further business, let them speak to those in charge. We must draw now to a conclusion and return to our homes.

The Bellman's bell sounds from outside the meeting room. The townspeople talk among themselves, exiting slowly in twos and threes. Some women move to join their husbands or to talk to various Selectmen.

Scene IX:
A Second Gathering of Friends

Characters:
Sarah Woolcott, *widow of George Woolcott, linen weaver*
Elizabeth Sackett, *wife of Symon Sackett, sea captain*
Mercy Carter, *wife of Samuel Carter, shoemaker*

Scene:
The time is October, 1635. The place is Elizabeth Sackett's Keeping Room.

Elizabeth and Mercy sit spinning. Sarah enters.

Elizabeth Sackett: *(Standing and moving toward Sarah to show her to a chair.)* I am glad to see thee. What a busy summer thee has had. I have not sat with thee since we shared a poset drink on Mayday last.

Sarah Woolcott: *(Sitting down.)* Shall I give thee a fair account? Mr. Starr had many questions and requests concerning the weaving business. For a while I was busy all the day doing his bidding. Then, I did agree that he and his family should stay in my house until his own was built. I scarce had time to tend my garden.

Mercy Carter: *(Excitedly.)* Mr. Carter did help to bring a loom into your shop and I was amazed to see bundles and packages of all sorts piled by the door for days!

Sarah Woolcott: Aye, Mr. Starr brought much new goods from England.

Mercy Carter: *(Still excited.)* Mr. Carter offered shoes in trade to Mr. Starr for these. *(She shows her hood and cape.)* I did not allow such beautiful clothes could be! But Mr. Starr says this lute-string hood and scarf be made in England from the finest yarns, and he will make them here.

The older women smile at Mercy's excitement.

Elizabeth Sackett: I hope I may find as much joy as thee has now, but I fear I shall be lonely this season since Mr. Sackett has set to sea again. *(To Sarah.)* He was much pleased, Goody, to have thy son Tymothy join his crew. He did say thy son will make a good sailor and is certain to be a credit to his family.

Sarah Woolcott: I thank thee for those words. My Tymothy was merry when his friends went to the harbor to see him off. But I am afeard for his steadfastness. One friend gave him two horseshoes and instructed him, in case of storm, to fire the horseshoes red hot and nail them to the main mast, thus to calm the seas.

Elizabeth Sackett: *(Smiles.)* Worry not about his faith, Goody; that story sounds not like the Devil's advice. But I think not much of that remedy for danger. We must hope and pray together for the ship's safe return.

Mercy Carter: Is it the truth that Captain Sackett is to bring more cattle when he returns from England? I do know that some which came in March were made ill from eating acorns.

Elizabeth Sackett: Aye, who could have thought that this would happen? Mr. Rice and several others lately went to look for oak trees near the pasture and I did see children with sacks in the common.

Mercy Carter: *(Sighing.)* I would not mind picking up acorns. I might not mind going to sea in a storm. But ringing our sow was a different matter. Since the selectmen ordered that all hogs must be ringed on penalty of 12 pence fine, Mr. Carter was determined to do the ringing soon. That animal did squeal so loud, and was impossible to hold, and when the ring went through her snout she kicked and I went flying in the mud!

Elizabeth Sackett: (*Laughing.)* Well, I am sorry for thee. But the hogs themselves, or maybe the Devil, are the cause of what is fallen out. One day last summer I went out from my house to see Goodman Rice his hog tearing up a blanket I had laid across my fence to dry.

Sarah Woolcott: Such a waste! But thee shall have another from the weave shop.

Elizabeth Sackett: I thank thee kindly. But on another matter: did thee hear that those of Mr. Hooker's company who lately removed to Connecticut have arrived there safe and sound?

Mercy Carter: Aye, and I was glad to hear of it, although I was not pleased to see them go. Truly, I thought they ought not to depart from us, being such close friends and neighbors, but Mr. Carter says they have too many sons and too little land.

Elizabeth Sackett: Says he so, indeed? But now another congregation is arrived from England on the ship Defence. Mr. Shepard is their head.

Mercy Carter: Marry! And here they may buy goodly houses ready built, and will be spared the hewing and marking and pegging that did make our husbands weary!

Elizabeth Sackett: And spared the dolesome cold that *we* endured!

Sarah Woolcott: *(Sighs.)* Alas, I feel the loss of good neighbors. But removing to Connecticut to begin again is not for such as be faint of heart and old, as I am.

Mercy Carter: Thee does not seem at all old and thee certainly is not faint of heart. I saw thee giving food to Indians who came through Newtowne talking of "hungry belly." I would not dare to do that.

Sarah Woolcott: How could I not give them food? They have children too, and many of their people are sick of a fever. With winter coming on, they may not live.

Elizabeth Sackett: *(Turning over the hourglass.)* Thee is kind and thee knows what good works are. That is not true for all in this town. I hear that Goodman Browne *did* sell the common wood for profit.

Mercy Carter: And was he fined? Mr. Carter will ask.

Elizabeth Sackett: He was. Before going to his ship, Mr. Sackett went to Goodman Spencer's house to read the town book on this and other matters. He says the fine was fair.

Sarah Woolcott: Alas my friends, the glass is turned up once, and I must be on my way back to the shop.

Mercy Carter: Pray thee, I must leave too. Mr. Carter will begin to wonder where I am.

Elizabeth Sackett: I bid thee both farewell. Come soon again and bring me news or else I shall greatly want for company.

Mercy and Sarah exit.

The Meeting at Newtowne

Appendices

Historical Notes:

The People and Their Government

The New England town meeting is often credited with being an important source of democratic practice in the United States, and rightly so. But it is important to realize that democracy was not born with the first town meeting. During the 17th century, the involvement of ordinary people in their own governance was suspect. Philosophers and political theorists spoke derisively of "mere democracies." In those days it was thought to be God's desire that people with status and property should govern people without. Consequently, when the first town meetings were organized, only white men who owned land in their respective towns, and who belonged to the church, could vote in their town meetings. And even among the people who qualified for the vote, strict patterns of deference meant that few people held power. "Weighty" office was usually reserved for the wealthiest men of good families who were over the age of forty. Town meetings were held once or twice a year. Between meetings, town governance was in the hands of Selectmen elected at the town meeting. The general practice was for the Selectmen to conceive policies and for the rest of the voting townsmen to rubber-stamp them. Common wisdom held that it was desirable to maintain a harmonious society. This depended upon individual acceptance of one's place. Puritans valued uniformity in world views and in religion; they recognized differences of wealth and birth. Above all, they had a passion for order. There were differences and dissenters, as any reading of the early histories will show, but Puritan ideas of individualism and individual rights were not the same as ours and their culture was not as diverse.

The earliest English settlers in Massachusetts came from various parts of England and, therefore, held differing views about land ownership. Some were accustomed to managing their own land and being more competitive than cooperative with their neighbors. Others thought more in terms of holding and managing farming and grazing lands in common. These differing land views certainly affected the discussion of crop planting and animal care at early town meetings. But the fact that these issues could be discussed at all indicates an important difference from

life in England. Because land was readily available, the level of participation in the first New England town meetings represented a "democratization" of political process as compared to England where land was a scarce resource and power more tightly held. The material in *The Meeting at Newtowne* reflects the behavior patterns characteristic of the earliest town meetings where deference was still the norm. Gradually, the common people became more aggressive when their needs weren't met, and by the 18th century deferential acceptance had given way to outspoken factions and conflict.

The General Court

The decisions made in town meetings, or by Selectmen, did not make up the only body of laws and regulations by which people in these early colonies were governed. Their lives were also affected by decisions of the General Court which met several times a year. Each town elected a representative to this body. Leaving most local issues to the Selectmen, the Court was free to deal with the larger issues. For example, it was at this level that the Reverend Thomas Hooker requested permission to "remove" to Connecticut with his flock. The Court also decided such matters as whether or not to grant money to the new university at Cambridge and whether to name the school after John Harvard. Earlier this Court was the forum for the trial of Anne Hutchinson, who was accused of troubling the peace of the Commonwealth by preaching in her home. Separation of church and state came later.

Animals and Society

An archaeological study of Old Plimoth revealed the surprising fact that people routinely dumped garbage out the windows all around their houses. It is probable that other New England towns followed the same practice. The obvious question is, how could they stand the stench and filth? When modern people engaged in an experiment and recreated the conditions of early New England town life, they discovered that there was no stench. As fast as people dumped the garbage, the freely roving chickens and hogs scrambled to eat it. The early New Englanders had an elegantly efficient method of feeding their stock.

However, these animals frequently caused problems as well. They damaged people's fences and ate their vegetables and herbs. The hogs were especially troublesome and citizens struggled for years to find ways to minimize the animal "scathes." They ordered fences to protect gardens and they required various devices to be worn around the necks of the hogs to prevent their entering a garden under a fence or between the pales. Note that fences were used to keep hogs out of, and not in, particular areas.

In this play, as in early New England communities, a distinction is made between cows and cattle. Since cows were lactating, they needed to be kept where their owners could milk them. The dry cattle could be maintained all season across the river and away from the planting fields.

You may wish to share with your students the following additional animal regulations. They are from the Newtowne records of 1636.

It is ordered that every man shall put his goats to the keeper before the 20th of March, and whosoever doth not put them to the keeper before that time and they be taken in any man's corn or hay, to pay 3 pence a goat for every fault.

It is ordered that whosoever finds a cocke hen or turkey in a garden it shall be lawful for them to require three pence apiece of the owner, and if they refuse to pay then to kill the same. (We presume they meant to kill the fowl, not the owner!)

Citizens and Strangers

When a newcomer was admitted as a member, the town made a commitment to be responsible for the townsman no matter what befell him. Because of the seriousness of this commitment, town citizens were very selective. They checked a prospective resident's family background and his references. They evaluated his character and his piety. They determined whether he was competent in his trade and whether the town needed such a trade. Once admitted, a town citizen held a privileged place. Not only could he vote, but he benefited greatly by the town's protection and various services.

The people living in or near a town but not admitted to it were called "Strangers." These people experienced little of the town's beneficence. Small favors were meted out only grudgingly and any services obtained usually had to be paid for.

Forms of Address

Patterns of hierarchy were reflected in the forms of address. Men of high status were called "Mister" and their wives "Mistress," as in Mister and Mistress Bradstreet. Ordinary people were addressed by the more common titles, "Goodman" and "Goodwife" (or "Goody") as in "Goodman and Goody Woolcott."

Patterns of subordination and deference characterized the family as well. For example, Sarah refers to her husband as "Mr. Woolcott" even when she is speaking of him to her closest friends.

Trees and Wood

Wood was a valuable resource and the early towns in New England took pains to regulate its use. A certain amount of woodland was set aside as common land for the benefit of the town's citizens and their families. The tall, straight, hefty trees in it were reserved for lumber. Scrawnier trees and crooked ones were used as firewood.

Because of the importance of the wood, each town elected a Woodreeve, not only to oversee the use of the common woodland but to inspect or "view" the required objects made of wood. For example, the Woodreeve checked each house ladder, required because of the danger of chimney fires, and all of the common fences which protected fields and gardens from the ravages of animals.

Scene VI, "The Woodreeve's Report," includes an order directing repair of the fence around the common fields. This order in its original form from 1635 is included here. At that time, spelling was not standardized and "s" was written as "f."

It is ordered that Euery one whoe hath anny part in the Comon Pales ſhall ſet ype a ſtake at the begining of thr pales wth ther mark ypon it and what ſoever paleing is Judged inſufiCient by

thofe wch are Appointed to vew the fame the owners are after notice given to fend within one ower after to med the fame and not to ceafe yntell it bee ffiniſhed ypon the forfeture of arod to anny one that ſhall mend it for them.

For further information, see the Glossary entry at top of p.41.

Voting with Corn and Beans

In the 1643 Statute of Elections from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the following note is found: "For the early choosing of assistants, the freemen shall use the Indian corn and beans, the Indian corn to manifest election and the beans contrary." Caution against cheating is found, too, in old records. From 1648: "...if any freeman shall put in more than one Indian corn or bean for the choice or refusal of any public Officer, he shall forfeit for every such offence ten pounds. And that any man that is not free or otherwise hath not liberty of voting, putting in any vote shall forfeit the like sum of ten pounds." In 17th century Massachusetts this method of voting seems to have been used on some occasions; raising hands, "aye" saying, and "papers" or ballots were also methods employed.

Education

In 17th century New England, communities that could afford to do so hired schoolmasters to teach boys and young men to read, to write, to cipher, perhaps to read Greek and Latin, and to respect the authority of their elders and of the Church. Students attended school from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the warmer months and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the winter. There also were Dame Schools in which young children of both sexes were taught by a woman. Still other girls learned to read and write from a literate parent.

Education was viewed as preparation for the ministry, and for that reason and others the authorities did not greatly favor education for women. A quote from Governor Winthrop's diary in 1645 illustrates: "The Gov. of Hartford came to Boston and brought his wife with him. A goodly young woman of special parts who has fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason which has been growing upon her divers years by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing and she had written many books. Her husband being very tender and

loving with her was loth to grieve her, but he saw his error when it was too late. For if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men whose minds are stronger she had kept her wits and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her."

Despite the views of Governor Winthrop and other authorities, some women did become literate and stayed sane. Anne Bradstreet, living first in Cambridge and then in Ipswich, was a poet who continued to write throughout her life. Her work was published in England in 1650, though without her name. That she was acutely aware of the contemporary view of women is clear from her poetry:

> "I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
> who says my hand a needle better fits.
> If what I do prove well, it won't advance.
> They'll say it's stolen; or else it was by chance."

Study Questions

Scene I

1) What does this scene show us about who spoke and who voted in a 17th century New England town meeting?

2) Keeping in mind your answer to question #1, do you think that these early New England communities were democratic as we now understand that concept? Explain.

3) What did you learn from this scene about some of the work women did in the 17th century? About the education of girls?

Scene II

1) Why do you think Symon Bradstreet asked for "care, diligence and forbearance" in the meeting discussions? What did he expect the townspeople to do after discussion was over and decisions were made? And why?

2) How does a town government today deal with the fact that citizens don't always agree on how things are to be done?

3) Why was it important for each person to have land for growing crops?

4) What did the town fathers want to know about Josea Starr before they could welcome him and issue him land? Why do you think they checked on Strangers so carefully?

Scene III

1) What arrangements did the townsmen agree upon for raising money to pay the school-master's salary?

2) Where does money come from today to pay teachers' salaries? In public schools? In private schools?

3) What can you learn from this scene about who could go to school, what subjects were taught, and what behavior was valued?

4) What are the similarities and differences between schools in the 17th century and schools today?

Scene IV

1) What is the major issue in this scene?

2) The problem was not fully resolved but was referred to the smaller body of Selectmen to decide. If you were a Selectman, how would you settle the issue?

3) Are there any modern day parallels to this dilemma? That is, is there something which is both a potential danger and a benefit to the community? (Note: Pigs cleaned up garbage but they also presented a danger to crops and sometimes to people.)

Scene V

1) As you learned in Scene IV, the early settlers were more interested in keeping animals out than in. With that in mind, see if you can guess why the cows and cattle needed people to watch over them.

2) Cows needed to be brought to the common every evening. Dry cattle could be kept across the river. What do you think the difference is between cows and dry cattle?

3) Describe what you think Newtowne people might have done when they learned that butter and milk and cheese would now be available to them. Which of those items would you miss the most if you didn't have it for months?

Scene VI

1) Describe the job of the Woodreeve.

2) Why were fences important to settlers in early New England? What are the reasons for having a fence today?

3) What do we learn about early 17th century houses in this scene? What else do you know about the dwellings of the first English settlers?

4) Why would someone need to reach the chimney in case of a fire?

5) How did the whole community benefit from each individual household having a way to quickly put out a fire?

6) Why would it be forbidden for one person to sell wood that belonged to the whole community?

Scene VII

1) In the 17th and 18th centuries, canoes were often used for transportation. They were left in the water and everyone knew to whom they belonged. The town meeting minutes show that the borrowing of canoes without permission was a frequent problem. How did the town elders decide to deal with this?

2) Can you give some examples from our century of objects borrowed without permission? Is that the same as stealing? How is this dealt with today and by whom?

Scene VIII

1) Discuss some of the reasons why corn and beans might have been used for voting at this time.

2) In addition to choosing Selectmen, what other positions did the townsmen vote on? Are any of these jobs still done by elected officials today? If so, which ones?

Scene IX

1) What happens in this scene to show that the people of Newtowne welcomed the Stranger, Josea Starr?

2) What suggestion did Tymothy Woolcott's friends give him as he went to sea? Do we today try to ward off dangers in ways that people might call superstitious?

3) How do you think the people of Newtowne must have felt when they saw their cows getting sick? How might they have found out what was wrong with the animals?

4) Why do you think so many citizens of Newtowne would decide to move to Connecticut and start building homes and a community all over again?

5) Why do you think the Native Americans living in Massachusetts might have come to the settlers for food?

6) What happened to Native American communities in New England when first explorers and trappers, then settlers, came to America?

Glossary of Words and Phrases

Since the language of 17th century England and New England included words and phrases not familiar to most 20th century students, it is helpful to introduce this vocabulary before beginning the play. We have also found that children enjoy figuring out from context what the words and phrases mean. Additional information on original meanings of English words may be found in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Scene I

BALE / Misery, calamity.

WAS TAKEN WITH THE SAME CAUSE / Came down with the same disease.

BE BROUGHT HOME / Be carried off to heaven, die.

STIR UP AND DOWN / Go out and about from one place to another.

WITH SUCH A RESTLESS SPIRIT / Unable to concentrate on any one thing for any length of time.

WOULD MAKE NO GREAT STAY / Would not be gone for long.

SOSSY / Sassy, saucy. Inclined to talk back instead of taking orders meekly.

WIT AND CARE / Intelligence and attention to instructions.

STRANGER / A person who is not a citizen of Newtowne and who cannot, therefore, participate in decision-making. Other early New England towns also had Strangers living in town or nearby. There were many reasons for this exclusion, but in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, of which Newtowne was part, proper religious views were necessary for citizenship.

MR. SACKETT DOTH NOT OWN THE COVENANT / Mr. Sackett hasn't agreed to accept the beliefs of the Puritan religious establishment in the Massachusetts Bay Colony; he is not a church member.

HE MAY NOT DECIDE THEIR KEEP / Since only members of the church can vote in town meeting, Mr. Sackett will have no say in how the cattle will be cared for.

PUT ME IN REMEMBRANCE / Remind me.

12 PENCE TO THE TOWN / Twelve silver pennies = one shilling, and twenty shillings = one pound of silver. Mr. Carter would surely want to avoid this fine. Town records in 1647 indicate that workers who earned more than 18 pennies a day were considered wealthy enough to pay additional taxes over and above the basic tax rate. So 12 pennies probably represents a substantial part of a day's earnings for a young craftsman like Samuel Carter, just getting started in business.

CRY THE MEETING / Announce that the meeting is about to begin.

POSET DRINK / Hot milk curdled or thickened with various ingredients: one recipe calls for sugar, wine, nutmeg, eggs and chicken broth.

Scene II

PLEDGE OBEDIENCE TO THE GENERAL CONSENT / Agree to obey the decisions that are made at the meeting by the votes of the townsmen.

MAY DO DAMAGE TO THE TOWN / May be against the best interests of the community.

THEY WERE CRIED DOWN / They were silenced by strong objections from others.

HE HATH REMOVED TO THIS LAND / He has come here.

Scene III

A MARVELOUS PROVIDENCE OF GOD / An especially favorable part of God's plan, showing His particular care for the people of Newtowne.

ROD OF CORRECTION / Punishment for misbehavior, often by beating with a slender flexible stick ("spare the rod and spoil the child").

I AM OF A DIFFERENT MIND / I disagree.

RATING UPON ESTATES / Taxing the townsmen according to the value of their property.

AFORESAID / Previously mentioned.

BROKEN LAND / Land that has been cleared and ploughed. Such land would be a source of income and so would be more valuable than land in its natural state.

HAVE SPOKEN DIVERSE THINGS / Have expressed different opinions.

20 POUNDS A YEAR / It's hard to say what this amounts to in today's dollars. We do know that in 1647 the town set a value on various kinds of property for tax purposes, and from that list it appears that 20 pounds would have purchased 1/6 of an ordinary house, or four steers, or twenty pigs.

CIPHER / Do simple arithmetic, or keep financial accounts, using the Arabic numerals and rules. The word comes from Arabic *sifre* (zero).

Scene IV

GOODMAN RICE HIS LARGE SOW / The female pig belonging to Goodman Rice. In this phrase the word "his" looks like a possessive pronoun but it is not; it is being used instead to form the possessive case of the proper noun "Goodman Rice." This was fairly common English usage between 1400 and 1750. Today we would write "Goodman Rice's large sow," and in slowly reading this aloud we come close to the old way of speaking.

SCATHE / Damage, harm.

MY SOW WORE A PROPER RING / Goodman Rice had put a metal ring through his pig's nostrils, making it painful for her to use her snout to open gaps in fences or dig under them. Of course, if the pig found a gap already big enough to stick her snout

through, she could use her strong head and shoulders to enlarge the opening.

YOKE / The yoke mentioned here would have been a wooden collar with bars extending to each side, made to be fitted over the neck of an unruly animal to keep it from pushing through gaps in hedges or fences.

PALES / The upright slats of a fence. In Newtowne these were probably saplings lashed or nailed to horizontal poles placed between posts set into the ground.

TANSY / A rather bitter herb, taken in the spring to improve digestion after a winter diet of salt meat and fish; it was also used to preserve meats, and hung in bunches to drive away flies, mosquitoes and ants.

Scene V

EXCEPT YOU HAVE LEAVE / Without permission. Goodman Rice is not supposed to make any private arrangements for the care of the cows either with personal friends for a lower price or with strangers for a higher price per cow.

DRY CATTLE / Cattle that are not giving milk.

Scene VI

WOODREEVE / A town official whose duty it was to manage the woodlots belonging to the town and to enforce town rules concerning the supply and uses of wood.

COMMON LAND / Much land in Newtowne, both open and wooded, was designated to be owned by the town rather than by individual townsmen. Individuals were allowed to use these public resources for the benefit of all, but no one was permitted to exploit them for private profit.

CAN BEAR WITNESS TO THIS / Has knowledge of this and can testify to it.

BRING TO ME THE FACT / Turn the information over to me.

UPON FORFIETURE OF A ROD / The townsman who neglects his duty to help keep the fence in good repair stands to lose some part of his share in the common field protected by that fence. According to one source from 1575, a rod of land would be a strip 16.5 feet wide and 660 feet long, amounting to one quarter of an acre. It appears that careless fence menders might lose a considerable part of their gardens.

THE INFORMER / The person who reports the violation of the rules.

POORLY / Unwell, ill.

IN THE FIRST INSTANCE / In the first place.

TO SEND...TO MEND THE SAME / To make sure that someone gets to work repairing these fences.

Scene VII

VEXED / Annoyed, irritated.

I CANNOT BUT THINK / I can't help thinking.

ABOVE AN HOUR / More than an hour.

SOMETHING FOR MY TIME / Mr. Bridge wants to be paid what he would have earned if he had been working instead of searching for his canoe.

Scene VIII

HE LACKS THE WEIGHT OF AGE OR MEANS / He isn't old enough, or wealthy enough, to command the respect of his fellow townsmen.

BEAR WITNESS IN THIS CAUSE / Have something to say about this matter.

CONSTABLE / Person appointed by the town to keep order.

GRIST MILL / Mill at which grain is ground into flour; a grinding mill as contrasted with, for example, a saw mill or a hammer mill.

IN MY STEAD / In my place, instead of me.

PASSED OVER / Not chosen.

Scene IX

KEEPING ROOM / Sitting room, parlor; a heated room, apart from the kitchen, where the family could spend time together and entertain company.

SHALL I GIVE THEE A FAIR ACCOUNT? / Do you want to hear the whole story?

I DID NOT ALLOW / I didn't realize, I had no idea.

LUTESTRING / A glossy silk fabric, used for decorative ribbons or for clothing to be worn on special occasions.

AFEARED FOR HIS STEADFASTNESS / Worried that he may be falling away from Puritan religion, *e.g.*, by resorting to superstitions or magical practices.

ILL FROM EATING ACORNS / The townspeople found that their recently imported English cattle reacted badly to eating acorns from oak trees in the New World.

WHAT IS FALLEN OUT / What's been going on, what's happening.

MARRY! / An exclamation expressing surprise or indignation, or used to emphasize what the speaker is about to say next. It has nothing to do with weddings, but is derived from an old oath (Mary!). In the 1600's few people know where this word came from and they commonly used it with no intention to swear.

MR. HOOKER'S COMPANY / The Puritan Congregation led by Thomas Hooker.

MARKING AND HEWING AND PEGGING / Measuring timbers, cutting and shaping them, and fastening them together with wooden pegs to construct the frame for a house.

DOLESOME / Accompanied by grief or sorrow.

THE GLASS IS TURNED UP ONCE / The hourglass has been turned over once; one hour has passed.

Additional Town Meeting Issues

These additional issues are actual ones taken from the research materials. We suggest that students can be given the opportunity to write their own original scenes based on these issues.

1) Meetings have been agreed upon and times appointed accordingly. There has been slackness of many their coming. Others have by long attendance wasted much time, to their great damage. Meetings will begin one half hour after the ringing of the bell. Those who are late shall forfeit 12 pence. Those who are absent without an excuse forfeit 3 shillings and 4 pence.

2) It is ordered that no child under the age of 10 years shall carry any fire from one house to another, nor any other person unless it be covered, upon forfeiture of 12 pence a time for every such fault. The 1/2 to the person that sees it, the other for the constable.

3) Whereas the evil disposition of the Natives hath caused us much watching and warding, to our great expense of time and ammunition, it is therefore ordered that every man who is admitted to our town shall pay 10 shillings to be used for ammunition and for the general defense of our town.

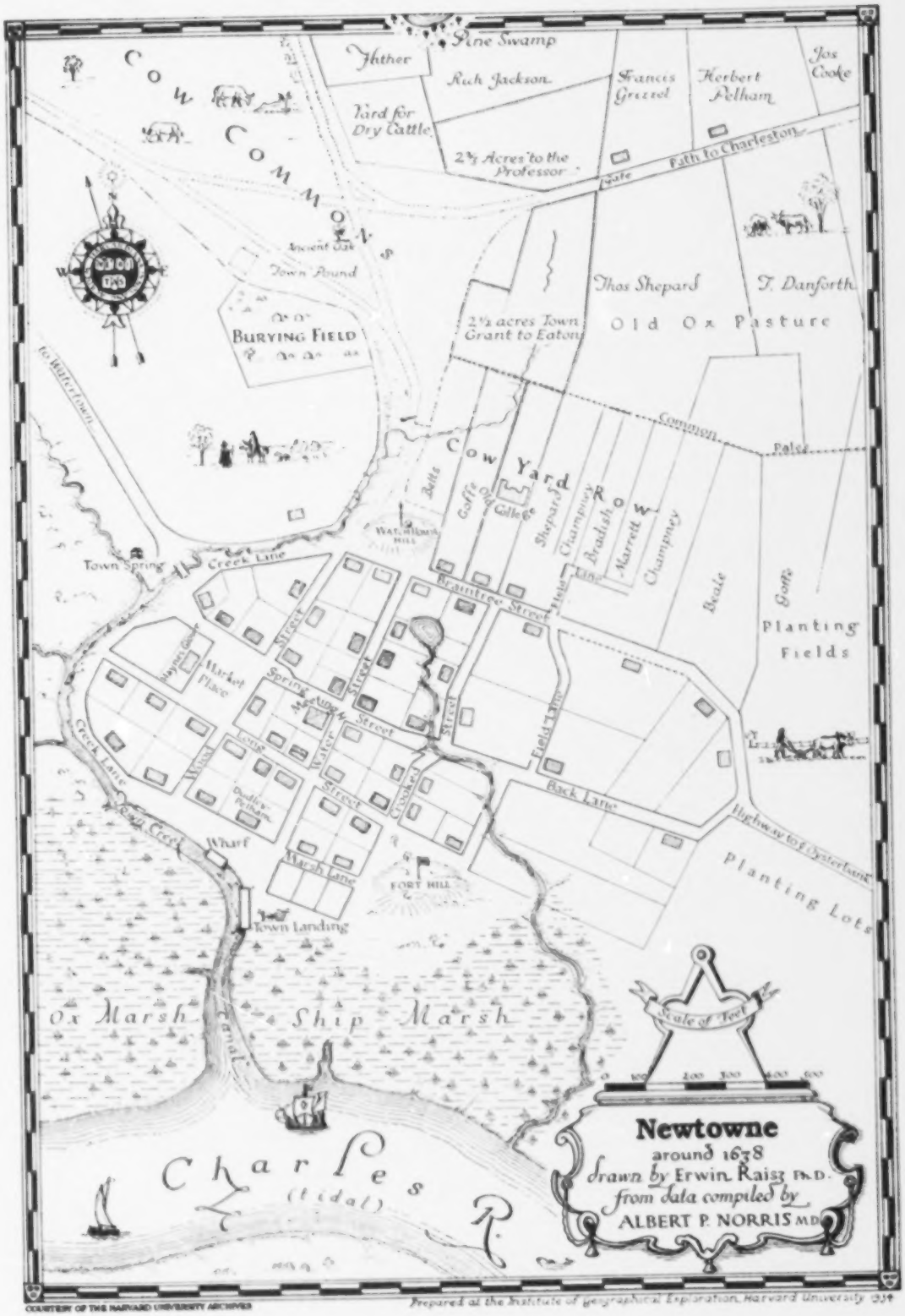
4) Ordered that in the great Island, a yard shall be fenced in for the keeping of swine and a shed built to lodge the swine, to be paid by the townsmen that put their swine into the yard.

5) Agreed that Thomas Hastings may lay down his lot into our society, his character and knowledge being looked into and found useful to us.

6) It being found by much experience that much damage is done by blackbirds, especially in Indian corn, both in the Springtime and afterward, and also the crows and jays do much harm, it is therefore ordered that whoever shall kill in our town any of the blackbirds shall have ninepence a dozen and for the other birds a penny apiece, provided they bring the heads of all such birds as they kill to Selectman Buckley who will keep account of the heads brought to him.

7) Guy Bambridge is hired to prevent dogs from making so much noise and disturbance at the meeting house when the townsmen are gathered, and also to scrape up the filth which any dogs may leave near the meeting house.

8) It is ordered that whosoever finds either horse, cow, goat or any other beast in any of the planting fields from the last week in the second month, shall have sixpence apiece for bringing them out of the field.


Cow Common
Pine Swamp
Jnthor
Ruh Jackson
Francis Grezel
Herbert Pelham
Jos Cooke
Yard for Dry Cattle
2⅓ Acres to the Professor
Gate
Path to Charleston
Ancient Gate
Town Pound
BURYING FIELD
Thos Shepard
T. Danforth
2½ acres Town Grant to Eaton
Old Ox Pasture
Common
Pales
Cow Yard Row
Bells
Goffe
Olde
Gilles
Shepard
Champney
Bradish
Marrett
Champney
Beale
Gore
Planting Fields
Watch House Hill
Town Spring
Creek Lane
Braintree Street
Market Place
Spring Street
Water Street
Fields Lane
Back Lane
Highway to Oysterbank
Planting Lots
Wharf
Town Landing
Watch Lane
FORT HILL
Ox Marsh
Ship Marsh
Canal
Charles (tidal) R.
Scale of Feet
0 100 200 300 400 600
Newtowne
around 1638
drawn by Erwin Raisz Ph.D.
from data compiled by
ALBERT P. NORRIS M.D.
COURTESY OF THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
Prepared at the Institute of geographical Exploration, Harvard University 1939

Bibliography

Teacher Bibliography

Allen, David Grayson. *In English Ways*. University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, 1981.

Bidwell, Percy and John Falconer. *History of Agriculture in the Northern U.S., 1620-1660*. Peter Smith, 1941.

Crawford, Mary Caroline. *Social Life in Old New England*. Grosset and Dunlap: New York, 1914.

Demos, John. *A Little Commonwealth*. Oxford University Press: London and New York, 1970.

Lockridge, Kenneth. *A New England Town, The First Hundred Years*. W.W. Norton and Co., Inc.: New York, 1970.

Paige, Lucius R. *History of Cambridge Massachusetts 1630 -1877*. Cambridge Historical Society: Cambridge, 1930

Powell, Sumner Chilton. *Puritan Village: The Formation of a New England Town*. Connecticut Wesleyan Press: Middlebury, Connecticut, 1963.

Records of the Town of Cambridge, 1630-1703, Vol. II. Printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1901.

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *Goodwives*. Oxford University Press: New York and Toronto, 1980.

Winthrop, John. *The History of New England From 1630 to 1649* Ed James Savage, Little Brown: Boston, 1853.

Students' Bibliography

Fiction:

Bulla, Clyde Robert. *A Lion to Guard Us*. Thomas Crowell, 1981. (Grades 3-5.)

Clapp, Patricia. *Constance: A Story of Early Plymouth.* Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1968. (Grades 5-8.)

Clapp, Patricia. *Witches' Children: A Story of Salem.* Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1982. (Grades 6-8.)

Cohen, Barbara. *Molly's Pilgrim.* Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1983. (Grades 2-4.)

Fleischman, Paul. *Saturnalia.* Harper Collins Junior Books, 1989. (Grades 6-8.)

Monjo, F.N. *The House on Stink Alley.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. (Grades 3-6.)

Petry, Ann. *Tituba of Salem Village.* Crowell, 1974. (Grades 6-8.)

Speare, Elizabeth George. *The Sign of the Beaver.* Dell Yearling, 1973). (Grade 4 and up.)

Yates, Elizabeth. *Amos Fortune, Free Man.* Dutton, 1967. (Grade 4 and up.)

Non-Fiction

Alderman, Clifford Lindsey. *The Story of the Thirteen Colonies.* Random House, 1966.

Earle, Alice Morse. *Child Life in Colonial Days.* Darby, 1980. (Grades 5-8.)

Fraidin, Dennis. *Anne Hutchinson: Fighter for Religious Freedom.* Enslow, 1989.

Fraidin, Dennis. *Massachusetts Colony.* Children's Press, 1987. (Grades 4-8.)

Fritz, Jean. *Who's That Stepping on Plymouth Rock?* Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1975. (Grades 3-5.)

Glubok, Shirley. *The Art of Colonial America.* Macmillan, 1970.

Knight, James E. *Adventures in Colonial America Series.* Troll Associate, 1982. (The Village, Winter at Valley Forge, Boston Tea Party, Colonists at Sea, Salem Days, Blue Feather's Vision, Journey to Monticello.)

Langdon, William Chauncy. *Everyday Things in American Life, 1607-1776.* Charles Scribner, 1937.

Meltzer, Milton. *All Times, All Peoples: A World History of Slavery.* Harper, 1980.

Perl, Lila. *Slumps, Grunts and Snickerdoodles: What Colonial America Ate and Why.* Clarion Books, 1975. (Grades 4-8.)

Raskin, Joseph and Edith. *Tales of Indentured Servants.* Lothrop, 1978.

Sloan, Eric. *A Museum of Early American Tools.* Todd, 1984.

Siegel, Beatrice. *A New Look at the Pilgrims: Why They Came to America.* Walker and Co., 1977. (Grades 4-6.)

Smith, E. Brooks and Robert Meredith, eds. *Pilgrim Courage: From a Firsthand Account by William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth Colony.* Little, Brown, 1962. (Grades 5-8.)

Tunis, Edwin. *Colonial Craftsmen.* Thomas Crowell, 1976. (Grades 5-8.)

Tunis, Edwin. *Colonial Living.* Thomas Crowell, 1976. (Grades 6 and up.)

ANNA ROELOFS holds advanced degrees in social work (M.S.W., University of Pennsylvania) and education (M.Ed., Bank Street College of Education). In the 1970's she helped found The New School of Utica, NY, a private primary school in which priority was given to developing and teaching of an integrated humanities/social studies curriculum; since 1981 she has been a Senior Staff Developer with the Cambridge Public Schools. Anna has participated as a researcher and curriculum writer in several projects funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, including the Masterworks Study Grant recently awarded to Cambridge for the study of Chinese history. Her publications include curricula on the Middle Ages and on Seventeenth Century New England, as well as educational materials for the Paul Revere House and the Museum of Our National Heritage.

BEVERLY SMABY received a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Yale and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Pennsylvania. Recently she accepted appointment as Assistant Professor of History at Clarion University in Western Pennsylvania, where she teaches courses on Colonial America, History of Women in America, Quantitative Methods in History, and History of the American West. Beverly's book *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem* (1988) is a study of cultural change in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania from the 1740s to the 1840s. She is currently working on a history of single women in the Moravian community during that same period.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Meeting at Newtowne

This play, written for use in classrooms (grades 5-12), introduces ideas about village life in New England in the 17th century. Students have an opportunity to learn about values, customs, language, and problems of these early American settlers.

The setting is Newtowne (now Cambridge), Massachusetts.
The time is 1635.

The theme of the play is governance and community. Scenes are set before, during, and after a town meeting. Material is drawn from the town records of Cambridge and Dedham as well as from other historical sources.

Teaching notes, study questions, a glossary and a bibliography are included.

© Primary Source 1992
P.O. Box 1711
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02238
P.O. Box 98
Blue Hill, Maine 04614

BEST COPY AVAILABLE